cáspita

Luís Cardoso

Se a terra de cada um fosse o local onde se aprendeu a dizer as primeiras palavras a minha seria certamente a ilha de Ataúro. Disseram-me que antigamente tinha um outro nome, Pulo Kambing o que quer dizer em malaio, a ilha das cabras. Não sei se alguma vez lá estiveram as cabras, sendo que quando lá cheguei não vi nenhuma e nunca me deram nenhuma explicação sobre o seu desaparecimento. Talvez como Cabo Verde, que hoje de verde só tem o nome. Soube mais tarde que também era um sítio para onde se mandavam também alguns presos de delito comum idos de Dili. Eram mais excluídos do que desterrados. Não tendo visto nem uns nem outros pensei que aquele só poderia ser mesmo um sítio de extinção das cabras e provavelmente dos presos.

Mas nem tudo estava desaparecido. Embora me tivessem aconselhado a não tomar como real tudo aquilo que os meus olhos viam, vi homens, de tanga, quase nus, tinham a pele escura quase verde e coberta de manchas brancas de sal a imitar

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By Jove!

Luís Cardoso

If one's native land were the place where one learned to say one's first words, mine would certainly be the island of Ataúro. I have been told that a long time ago it had another name, Pulo Kambing, which in Malay means island of goats. I don't know if there were ever any goats there, since when I arrived I didn't see any, and I have never been given an explanation about their disappearance. Maybe it is like Cape Verde, which nowadays is verdant only by name. I found out later that it was also a place where some prisoners for common crimes were sent from Dili. These were outcast rather than exiled. Having seen neither one nor the other I thought that it really must be a place for the extinction of goats and probably prisoners.

But not everything had disappeared. Although I had been advised not to take for granted everything my eyes saw, I did see men in loincloths, almost naked; their skin was dark, almost green, covered in white salt spots that resembled scales. Their eyes

escamas. Os olhos de amêndoa e encarnados e os cabelos ruivos a imitar os corais. Olhavam-me boquiabertos como se tivessem vindo directamente do fundo do mar. Vendo-me tão curioso junto desses pescadores confidenciaram-me que eles eram descendentes de tubarões. Estavam temporariamente em terra mas quando, se enfastiavam voltavam para o mar. Nunca eram enterrados. Não sentiam o peso da terra em cima dos corpos. Que eu não tivesse medo deles porque em terra tinham tanto de mansos como de sonolentos. Só acordavam no mar. Com aquele oceano cheio de tubarões seriam certamente devorados pelos antepassados se fossem para lá dormitar. Não tinham a basta dentadura e ninguém ousou acusá-los de serem eles que, saindo do mar, primeiro comeram as cabras e depois quando ficaram sem elas os presos. Gostavam muito mais de peixe.

As primeiras palavras que eu terei dito foram certamente em tetun. A língua de cada um deveria ser aquela com que se disse as primeiras palavras. Sempre pensei que fosse o tetun a língua dos meus pais. Herdava-se como a cor da pele ou o tamanho do nariz. Um dia quando eles conversavam julgando estarem longe dos ouvidos alheios, os surpreendi a falarem uma outra língua que eu nada entendia. Não resisti a perguntar-lhes que palavras eram aquelas, tão diferentes do que eu falava. Calaram-se e minha mãe disfarçando disse que eu é que tinha compreendido mal. De tanto andar no fundo do mar com os descendentes dos tubarões que estavam em terra a olhar os peixes, o sal depositara-se no meu ouvido. Que eu estava a ficar surdo, embora tivesse dito que estava a ouvir tão

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were almond-shaped and red, red too was their hair, like coral. They looked at me open-mouthed, as if they had come directly from the bottom of the sea. Noticing how curious I was about these fishermen, someone told me in confidence that they were descended from sharks. They were temporarily on land, but whenever they became bored they went back to the sea. They never got buried. They never felt the earth's weight on their bodies. And I should not be afraid of them because on land they were as meek as they were sleepy. They only woke up when in the sea. In that shark-infested ocean they would certainly be devoured by their ancestors if they took a nap down there. They were not sufficiently well-endowed with teeth, and nobody dared accuse them of being the ones who, coming out of the sea, first ate the goats, so that they had none left, and then ate the prisoners too. They'd much rather eat fish.

The first words I ever uttered were no doubt in Tetum. One's mother tongue ought to be the language in which one said one's first words. I always thought that Tetum was my parents' language. One inherited a language just as one inherited the colour of one's skin or the size of one's nose. One day while they were talking, thinking that they were out of earshot, I caught them speaking another language which I didn't understand. I couldn't resist asking them what those words were, so different from the ones I spoke. They went quiet, and my mother, covering up, said that I had misheard. Because I was so often at the bottom of the sea with the descendants of the sharks, salt

bem, todas as palavras, incluindo aquelas que diziam os tubarões que estavam em
terra. Só mais tarde, muito mais tarde, quando recebemos a visita dos parentes da
minha mãe e me disseram que eram de Fahinihan e falavam uma língua que tinha
o nome de laclei e o mesmo fizeram os parentes do meu pai dizendo que eram de
Manufahi e falavam uma outra língua chamada mambae, tive então a minha
oportunidade soberana de lhes cobrar uma resposta séria, porque então me ensi-
naram apenas o tetun? Porque então me excluíram das suas raízes?

Nunca me deram uma resposta precisa. Apenas que cada um falava a língua que os pais lhe ensinassem. Só mais tarde e muito mais tarde pude compreender quão sábios foram eles. O tetun era a língua que me dava acesso à catequese, depois da catequese ao baptismo e, sendo católico praticante, poderia entrar para a escola dos missionários onde se leccionava em português. Falando essa língua eu teria provavelmente um futuro mais certo que a maioria dos meus parentes, sem exclusão nem arrependimento. Por isso nunca me ensinaram uma única palavra das respectivas línguas. Para onde depois se retiravam e escondiam os seus segredos. Um círculo bem gentio, restrito e de exclusividade deles.

Primeiro aprendi o catecismo em tetun. As orações. E soube então que Deus estava em toda a parte e falava todas as línguas. Incluindo as línguas dos meus colegas os descendentes dos tubarões que comigo se sentavam na esteira para aprenderem a dizer em tetun as orações. Tinham vindo das suas aldeias, de Beloi

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had built up in my ears. I was going deaf, although I said I heard very well, all the words, including those which the sharks said on land. Only later, much later, when my mother's relatives came to visit and told me that they were from Fahinihan and spoke a language called Laclei, and when my father's relatives did the same, saying they were from Manufahi and spoke another language called Mambae, did I have the perfect opportunity to demand a serious answer: why then had they taught me Tetum only? why had they thus excluded me from their roots?

They never gave me a precise answer. Only that everyone spoke the language their parents taught them. Only later, much later was I able to understand how wise they were. Tetum was the language that gave me access to catechism classes, and after that to baptism, and, being a practising Catholic, I could then attend a missionaries' school where the teaching was done in Portuguese. Speaking that language I would probably have a much more secure future than the majority of my relatives, without ostracism or regrets. That was why they had never taught me a single word of their respective languages, into which they could then retreat to keep their secrets from me. A very pagan, restricted and exclusive circle all of their own.

First I learned my catechism in Tetum. The prayers. Then I found out that God was everywhere and spoke all languages. Including the language of my companions, the descendants of sharks, who sat with me on the woven mat to learn to say their prayers in Tetum. They had come from their villages, from Beloi and Bikeli where sharks were

e de Bikeli onde os tubarões eram azuis e falavam o Rahêssuk, de Makili lá no alto da montanha de Mánu-koko onde eram trepadores e falavam o rêssuk e de Makdadi onde eram pesados como o chumbo e falavam o raklung'u. Não resisti a fazer uma pergunta quando fui incumbido de a fazer, coisa que todos os catecúmenos deveriam fazer para saírem da sua ignorância ou para abandonarem a sua sabedoria. Porque então sendo todos os homens criaturas de Deus, não falavam todos a mesma língua ou, porque é que sendo Deus tão exigente que falava todas as línguas, exigia apenas uma para se entender com os homens?

Na minha inocência descobri que Deus se calhar só falava a língua dos seus funcionários. Dos seus mandatados ou porta-vozes. Eram eles os que escolhiam para Deus a língua com que deveria entender os homens.

Depois veio a escola. O alfabeto, a juntar as letras, a formar as palavras e a fazer as equivalências em língua portuguesa onde tudo passou a ter um nome diferente e o Maromac que eu aprendi em tetun a nunca pronunciar em vão o seu santo nome, passou a constar apenas com quatro letras maiúsculas, DEUS.

Como sempre e para dar sentido a tudo o resto, vieram depois as orações. Já não precisávamos do tetun para falar com Deus. Na medida em que as récitas que antes eram ditas em tetun foram literalmente traduzidas do português. Uma versão original e legítima sem deturpação da mão escorregadia dos escribas. Diziam-me que essa era a língua que Deus escolheu para falar com os homens.

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blue and spoke Rahêssuk, from Makili on top of the Mánu-koko mountain where they were climbers and spoke Rêssuk, from Makdadi where they were heavy as lead and spoke Raklung'u. I couldn't resist asking a question when I was entrusted with asking it, something that all neophytes ought to do so as to put aside their ignorance or abandon their wisdom. Why then, if all men were God's creatures, did they not all speak the same language, or why, if God was so demanding that he spoke all languages, did he not require only one in order to communicate with humans?

In my innocence I discovered that maybe God only spoke the language of his functionaries. That of his mandataries or his spokesmen. They were the ones who chose the language in which God was to communicate with people.

Then came school. The alphabet, joining up letters, forming words and finding equivalents in the Portuguese language, where everything came to have a different name, and Maromac whose name I had learned in Tetum never to pronounce in vain came to consist of three capital letters, GOD.

As always, to give meaning to everything else, the prayers came too. We no longer needed Tetum to speak with God. That was because the prayers which we previously recited in Tetum had been translated literally from Portuguese. An original and legitimate version, without any corruption by the slippery hand of scribes. I was told that that was the language chosen by God for speaking with humans. According to that logic, before God spoke with all the others he spoke first with some.

Seguindo essa lógica de que Deus antes de falar com todos os outros falava primeiro com alguns.

Mais tarde tendo feito a comunhão e com a memória bem exercitada com as récitas passei a ajudar a missa. Estando tão perto do sacerdote deveria responder em primeiro lugar às palavras do padre para que os devotos ouvindo-me pudessem acompanhar com as respostas correctas e em tempo certo. Pelo que deveria decorar também a parte do responsal da missa em latim. Quando perguntei ao padre porque não dava as respostas em português ou em tetun, que eram línguas que Deus também entendia, respondeu-me que fora essa a primeira língua que se utilizava nas missas, uma escolha de papas para Deus entender os homens. Vendo-me tão atarefado a decorar as palavras e, para dar importância ao acto que eu estava a fazer como se não bastasse o facto de invocar o nome dos sucessores de Pedro, para validar o seu argumento, acrescentou que essa era também a língua com que os imperadores de Roma dominaram o mundo. Pelo que o meu esforço não era em vão. Estava a pronunciar muitas palavras que foram ditas pela boca dos imperadores.

Cheguei definitivamente à conclusão que Deus só falava mesmo a língua dos mais poderosos. Durante algum tempo fiz disso a minha profissão de fé. Se és fraco junta-te aos mais fortes. Fala também a língua de Deus.

Mais tarde com guia de marcha familiar fomos parar a Ponta Leste. Aquilo que se dizia Loro Sae. Uma terra que tinha como lema um dito de Camões «Que o sol logo em nascendo vê primeiro». Afinal o sol não nascia de igual para toda a

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Later, having received communion, my memory well versed in the recitations, I began to serve as an altar-boy. Being so close to the priest I was supposed to be the first to answer his words, so that on hearing me the congregation could follow with the correct answers at the right moment. For that I also had to learn by heart the responses of the Latin mass. When I asked the priest why he did not give the answers either in Portuguese or in Tetum, languages that God also understood, he answered that Latin was the first language used for mass, a choice made by the popes so that God could communicate with humans. Seeing me so busy learning the words by heart, and in order to add to the importance of the act I was performing (as if the fact that I was invoking the names of Peter's successors were not enough), to validate his argument he added that Latin was also the language with which the Roman emperors had dominated the world. Therefore my effort was not in vain. I was pronouncing many words which had been uttered by the mouths of emperors.

I arrived at the definite conclusion that God really only spoke the language of the most powerful. For a while I turned that into my profession of faith. If you are weak, join the strong. Speak also God's language.

Later, with travel documents for the whole family, we moved to Ponta Leste. What was called Loro Sae. A land which had as its motto a verse by Camões: «Which the sun sees first when it rises.» After all, the sun did not rise the same for everybody. It always

gente. Nascia sempre em primeiro lugar para alguns. Assim como Deus escolheu Israel para se fazer anunciar. Sorte minha. Não tendo feito parte da escolha primeira de Deus estava na terra da escolha do sol para se fazer anunciar. Nem sempre fui escalonado para o último.

Moro era uma vila bem vestida de árvores e também da quinina, onde o velho enfermeiro me obrigava a enterrar os meus dentes nas cascas do tronco, quando o comprimido amarelo estava esgotado na farmácia. Bem colocada no alto de um morro, de onde vigiava os barcos que passavam lá ao longe sem pena nem piedade dos outros que ficaram definitivamente em terra, com tanto mar pela frente depois da guerra ali travada entre australianos e japoneses. Os portugueses aproveitaram a derrocada para mudarem a vila para um local mais aprazível. Da antiga casa colonial ficaram as fachadas onde uma buganvília resistia, trepando pelas colunas e depositando no topo as suas flores vermelhas como numa campa. Nunca vi umas ruínas tão bonitas na minha vida. Disseram-me que a Ponta Leste era uma terra de homens hostis aos estrangeiros, onde até nem se falava o tetun. Sentíamo-nos estrangeiros pelo facto de não termos por baixo do chão que pisávamos as palavras seguras do tetun. Eles falavam o fataluco, donos do chão que eles pisavam.

Lembro-me daquela primeira quinta-feira. Como era o dia da feira, da luta de galos e da missa, vesti-me de branco para a celebração, penteei-me para a luta de galos com o penteado puxado para cima como crista de galo. Aproveitava-se a

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rose first for some. Just as God chose Israel to reveal himself. My good fortune. Not having been included in God's first choice, I was in the land where the sun chose to reveal itself. I was not always placed last.

Moro was a village well-endowed with trees, and also with quinine, where the old nurse made me bite hard on tree trunk bark, whenever the chemist ran out of yellow tablets. It was well placed on a mountain top from where it kept an eye on the ships that sailed past in the distance, showing no pity or compassion for those who had been left on shore, with so much sea in front of them, after the war fought there between Australians and Japanese. The Portuguese availed themselves of the opportunity provided by the devastation to move the village to a more pleasant location. Of the old colonial house only the façade remained, where a bougainvillea resisted, climbing the columns and depositing its red flowers on the top, as if on a grave. In all my life I have never seen ruins as pretty as those. I was told that Ponta Leste was inhabited by people hostile to foreigners, where they did not even speak Tetum. We felt like foreigners because we did not have the safe, familiar Tetum words under the ground we trod there. Masters of the ground beneath their feet, they spoke Fataluco.

I remember that first Thursday. As it was market day, with cock fight and mass, I dressed in white for the celebration and combed my hair upwards in a cocky's crest. We used the opportunity of the fair to gather first the devotees of the Church, then the

feira primeiro para reunir os devotos da missa e depois os devotos da luta de galos. Uma sequência lógica. Pedia-se na missa protecção para os galos. Vindo da missão de Fuiloro lá aparecia o padre Júlio, salesiano, italiano, motard, por esta ordem. Montado na sua lambreta vermelha, inclinava-se nas curvas como a torre de Pisa e chegava com o seu ar heróico de Ben-Hur, depois de ter domado os leões no Coliseu dando-lhes em troca a sua bendita pasta pela vida de catecúmenos. Pediu-me para lhe ajudar à missa e como pensava que era em latim, sendo ele romano, disse-lhe que sim. Quando ele começou com as primeiras palavras em fataluco respondi-lhe que não. Ele olhou para mim com o seu ar de gladiador, desafiando a minha recusa, e eu vendo os músculos a crescerem nos braços fortes dele, os olhos enraivecidos por eu ter recusado o paraíso que ele me oferecia, pronto a esmagar-me e a atirar-me para as feras, apressei a dizer que sim, que sim, que sim. Ele fazia as orações em fataluco e quando era a minha vez de responder o fazia em tetun. Havia uma discrepância de sons e de entendimentos e como ele nada compreendia as minhas réplicas sendo que eu também não lhe compreendia as prédicas às de tantas enervou-se e virando-se para mim, gritou: Em latim, *cáspita*!!!

Ele queria um som mais audível. Já que eu não conseguia fazê-lo em fataluco, que fizesse em latim como faziam os cristãos de Roma. Nunca soube o que ele quereria dizer com cáspita. Na altura entendi como se ele tivesse dito criança em fataluco. Quando mais tarde soube que em fataluco, criança se dizia quinamoco, de todas as vezes que me cruzava com ele e em voz baixa, repetia: cáspita!!!

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devotees of the cock fights. A logical sequence. At mass we prayed for the cocks' protection. Coming from the Fuiloro mission, there appeared Father Giulio, who was a Salesian, an Italian, a motorbike-rider, in this order. Riding his red Lambretta, he leaned over at the curves like the tower of Pisa and arrived with his heroic look à la Ben-Hur who has just tamed the lions in the Colosseum, exchanging his blessed portfolio for the lives of the neophytes. He asked me to serve as an altar-boy, and as I thought that with him being a Roman it would be in Latin, I said yes. When he began with the first words in Fataluco, I said no. He looked at me with his gladiator's eyes, challenging my refusal, and I, seeing the muscles bulging in his strong arms, his eyes infuriated by my rejection of the paradise he offered me, ready to crush me and to throw me to the wild beasts, I hastened to say yes, yes, yes. He said the prayers in Fataluco and when it was my turn to respond I did it in Tetum. There was a discrepancy in sounds and meanings, and as he did not understand my answers any more than I understood his prayers, all of a sudden he lost his temper, turned to me and shouted: In Latin, *caspita!*

He wanted a more audible sound. Since I could not do it in Fataluco, I should do it in Latin like the Christians in Rome. I never found out what he meant by *caspita*. At the time I thought the word meant boy or child in Fataluco. When later I found out that child in Fataluco was «quinamoco», each time I walked past him I repeated softly: *caspita!*

Acrescentei então o fataluco como uma das línguas com que Deus, que está em toda a parte e fala várias línguas se fazia entender com os timorenses, depois do latim, do português e do tetun.

Mais tarde pude constatar que Deus falava todas as línguas. Aliás compreendia todas as línguas dos homens incluindo aquelas que os tubarões, que estavam em terra, falavam e aquelas que os meus pais murmuravam entre dentes apenas para consolo de um Deus menor. Tudo menos: *cáspita*!!!

So I added Fataluco to the list of languages in which God, who is everywhere and speaks various languages, communicated with the Timorese, after Latin, Portuguese and Tetum.

Later I was able to verify that God spoke all languages. In any case, he understood all human languages, including those spoken by the sharks who were on land and those which my parents whispered secretly simply for the consolation of a minor God. Everything except: *caspita!*

Translator's note: *caspita!* – Italian interjection: *Good heavens!* or perhaps better in this context: *By Jove!*

[*Translation into English by Isabel Moutinho*]

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THE PATHS OF MULTICULTURALISM
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Timor Loro Sae and postcolonialism

José Leon Machado

Dili-Timor,
Pain always forgotten,
Pain so present!

Ruy Cinatti, *Paisagens Timorenses com Vultos*, 1974.

When the Portuguese first arrived in Timor, about twenty five years after Vasco da Gama had discovered the sea route to India (1498), they found a more or less homogeneous group of kingdoms on the island. The initial contacts were minimal, limited to some commercial exchanges in one or another small village near the coast. Only in the seventeenth century, after they had already settled in the island of Solor, and because the sandal trade presented a certain economical advantage, did the Portuguese, particularly traders and missionaries, establish themselves in some costal zones. Relations between the Portuguese and the native rulers of the Timorese kingdoms were minimal, and it was thanks to the missionaries that both peoples gradually came closer together (cf. *verbi gratia* Branco, 1987).

With the arrival of the Dutch, their commercial rivals, in the Indian Ocean, the Portuguese began to establish a more significant presence in Timor, which we may call precolonial. This incipient colonialism was characterised by the construction of fortified locations with help from the natives, and by the establishing of alliances with the rulers for mutual protection and for the purpose of commerce.

It was not until the end of the eighteenth century that relations developed further: confronted with various rebellions against them in several Timorese kingdoms, most of them stirred up and led by the Dutch, who, meanwhile, had settled on the west side of Timor, the Portuguese initiated a systematic plan for colonisation. They moved into the interior of the island, until then almost unknown to them, and implemented a policy of alliances with several kingdoms

whose rulers pledged themselves to respect the sovereignty of the King of Portugal. Portugal partially respected the traditional divisions of the region, as well as the authority of the several *liurais*, promoting a policy of non-interference. On the other hand, the kingdoms pledged themselves to pay a tax. It was, in fact, due to the payment of such tax that some rebellions broke out, ending in 1912 with what was known as the Manufai Rebellion, strongly repressed by the Portuguese administration (cf. *verbi gratia* Branco, 1987).

From those rebellions we can easily infer that the Timorese people have never willingly accepted foreign presence and interference. It must be pointed out, however, that the concept of a Timorese people began to take shape only in the second half of the twentieth century. Timor was, as we have said, a territory made up of several kingdoms, some isolated by natural barriers, such as mountains, or speaking different languages and following different traditions and customs. Up till the twentieth century there never was an effective unity of those kingdoms. The most they could achieve in wartime were alliances among themselves to fight against foreign presence (Javanese, Chinese, Portuguese or Dutch), or against rival neighbour kingdoms.

Timor's economic value for Portugal was always problematic. Initially, Portugal intended to take over the sandal trade, which was under Chinese control. Portugal was never able to control it totally, and when this product lost its commercial attraction, the territory could not find a viable substitute. Thus, with Timor being one of the few Portuguese colonies not able to finance itself, being dependent on Lisbon, Goa, and Macau, the Portuguese administration of the territory depended on financial support from those centres. This was due to difficulties in tax collection and the slowness of the territory's economic growth.

It was not until the twentieth century that the implementation of new agricultural products succeeded, followed by systematised exploitation. One of those products was coffee, which became one of the main sources of profit from the colony, until 1975. Oil exploration also began with the cooperation of American and Australian companies. In Geoffrey C. Gunn's words, from his book *Timor Loro Sae: 500 Years*, «Portuguese Timor's early postwar experience suggests that it was more of a drain on colonial resources than an asset» (Gunn, 1999: 250).

Strangely, while in other Portuguese colonial territories thousands of settlers established themselves and exploited natural resources, the same did not happen in Timor. There, the presence of Portuguese people from the metropolis was very small, limited to administrative staff (and even amongst these there were some native Timorese), soldiers, some missionary priests, a few political convicts, and farmers. That was perhaps the reason why there was no open confrontation

between colonised and colonisers, as was the case after the Indonesian invasion in 1975.

One of the reasons why the Portuguese did not settle in Timor in large numbers, as they did in Angola and Mozambique, is the fact that the territory is geographically distant from the metropolis; also, the Portuguese preferred regions economically more attractive. Geoffrey Gunn observes it too in the following passage: «Unlike colonies of direct domination, including the settler colonies of Angola and Mozambique, Timor, an oceanic outpost, stood with such backwaters or zones of extreme isolation as French Laos or, in the Portuguese world, Guinea, where local forms of tributary power attenuated the colonial and, later, the colonial-capitalist mode of production» (Gunn, 1999: 285).

The major impact of the Portuguese and the Dutch presences in Timor is twofold: it concerns borders and religious issues.

As we have already mentioned, up until the arrival of the Portuguese the whole island of Timor was made up of kingdoms which shared some traditions but were separated by geographical barriers, language and ethnicity. Initially the Portuguese and the Dutch presence did not extend to the whole territory, that is to say to its vaster areas, but only to small enclaves, producing a map dotted with small territories or costal settlements. It was not until 1926, after long negotiations between the Portuguese and the Dutch governments, that a boundary agreement was reached and a final map of the territories belonging to East and West Timor drawn up.

As it happens, this agreement triggered «a terrible hubris» (Gunn, 1999: 14). This occurred because when drawing artificial borders Portugal and the Netherlands «failed to take into account the ethnic and linguistic heterogeneity of the island's peoples» (*ibid.*). This is in fact a problem common to almost every territory colonised by the Europeans in Africa, Asia and America.

Religious differences opened a further gulf between the two sides of the island. While on the Dutch side Protestantism predominated, although there continued to exist a certain freedom of religion which allowed the practice of other religions, such as Islamism, and Animism, on the Portuguese side Catholicism prevailed, with all other religions being repressed. Even though there are no reliable statistics as to the number of Catholics on the east side of the island, we know that their number increased proportionally after the establishment of the first Dominican missionaries, who settled there in the seventeenth century and proceeded to a systematic apostolate.

Nowadays, according to data from the Dili and Baucau dioceses, two main religions subsist in Timor Loro Sae: Catholicism and Animism. With Animism

having been progressively contaminated by the Catholic symbology and ritual, it is very difficult to say whether those who practise this rudimentary form of religion are actually Animists or Catholics.

What is certain is that the urban and coastal population of Timor Lorosa'e is mainly Catholic, which is due to the missionaries' work, on the one hand, and the (albeit superficial) acculturation undertaken by the Portuguese in the twentieth century, on the other.

Despite the isolation of the colony from the central power, there appeared throughout the territory, in particular after World War II, an acceptable network of schools, complemented by boarding schools directed by the missionaries, which greatly contributed to the creation of an elite whose members would be the protagonists of the short-lived 1975 independence.

1. *Indonesian neo-colonialism.*

After the Portuguese Democratic Revolution of 1974, by which the military put an end to the totalitarian regime which had been in power in Portugal for over 40 years, a process of decolonisation began in the territories previously under Portuguese administration. Much has been said and written about the way this decolonisation was carried out. Twenty-five years later, we can be sure that the process was rushed, not carefully planned, and even irresponsible. What has become apparent is that successive provisional governments wanted to get rid of the burden the colonies represented as soon as possible.

In Angola, Mozambique and Guinea, a generalised war of resistance against Portuguese colonialism had broken out, which did not benefit the young Portuguese democracy. This war could only end when the Portuguese departed from the territories, and subsequently granted them independence. That was what they tried to do as soon as possible. But this fact brought damaging consequences to the various territories that became independent, as they were not democratically prepared for it, leading them to wars that continue even now. Angola is the most obvious case.

Unlike in other colonies, in East Timor there was no armed movement against the Portuguese presence. Except for the Viqueque rebellion of 1959, instigated by Indonesia, Timor lived in peace from the exit of the Japanese at the end of World War II until the conflict between UDT and Fretilin supporters broke out in 1975 (cf. Pires, 1991). This conflict, which ended with Fretilin's victory, was in fact the pretext for Indonesia to invade the territory with the connivance of the USA and Australia.

In 1974 and 1975, Portuguese administration actually intended to grant independence to East Timor, as in fact it did to other colonies. However, there were some who defended an enlarged autonomy instead of total independence. Autonomy would be part of the transitional period leading up to independence. This idea had to do with the fact that there was really no armed opposition to the Portuguese presence.

The poet Ruy Cinatti, one of the few Portuguese who knew the territory well both geographically and socially, was in favour of the proposal for autonomy because he understood that the Timorese people were not yet ready, politically and economically, for independence. Confronting those who defended Timor's integration in Indonesia, he maintained that, even more so than the Portuguese, the Indonesians were unable to provide the economical help Timor needed so much. «Have they forgotten, by any chance», says the poet in a final warning in his book *Paisagens Timorenses com Vultos* «what Indonesian Timor is like under the rule of the Javanese, not Timorese but Javanese, who are as conceited as the Castilians in relation to the remaining Spanish groups? Have they forgotten that the Indonesian Timorese keep crossing the border in search both of bread and medical treatment, which they lack so badly?» (Cinatti, 1992: 563).

For Ruy Cinatti «self determination is a right that cannot be questioned, as long as it is explained before it is loved. Or simultaneously loved and explained» *(Ibidem)*. For this writer, self-determination implies a spiritual coming of age to which Portugal should contribute. However, this did not happen, and the governments which presided over the destinies of the country between 1974 and 1975, giving free rein to the creation of local political movements as they aimed to speed up the decolonisation process, adopted an attitude of non-intervention which was fatal to East Timor.

The pretext for the Indonesian invasion of 1975 was, as we have mentioned, the disagreement between the two major political movements in East Timor: UDT and Fretilin. The UDT, or Timorese Democratic Union, followed a conservative line and defended independence. Fretilin, or the Revolutionary Front of Independent East Timor, was a left-wing movement which also defended independence, demanding at the same time an immediate end to Portuguese colonialism. There was also Apodeti, a minority political movement, some of whose leaders had participated in the Viqueque rebellion of 1959; Apodeti defended the integration of the territory in Indonesia.

The leaders of the two major movements had some divergences which led them to a war that was quickly won by Fretilin. Even though the Portuguese administration was still in the territory, it kept out of the conflict. By then,

pressured by the United States' not wanting another Cuba in the Indian Ocean which might raise difficulties to the passing of American nuclear submarines, Indonesia decided to intervene and invaded the territory on December 7, 1975. That was still the time of the Cold War and to all who could be suspected of Marxist-Leninist tendencies the United States responded with force, or made others respond for them.

Nevertheless, as Geoffrey Gunn well understands, the fear that East Timor might become a country under communist influence was unfounded, for the simple reason that Marxism-Leninism had no tradition in the territory as it did, for example, in West Timor. «Fretilin's sense of social justice», says the author, «sprang from the Catholic church, Timor's communitarian traditions, and drew its allies from the people themselves, a benign version of peasant populism» (Gunn, 1999: 268).

By invading East Timor, Indonesia not only satisfied the United States' wish to see a supposedly dangerous communist presence removed from the region's waters, it also satisfied its old desire to control a territory rich in natural resources, particularly oil.

The twenty-four years of Indonesian colonialism which ended in 1999, when the Timorese massively rejected integration in Indonesia in a referendum organised by the United Nations, were, from an economical and social point of view, catastrophic. The Timorese had never reconciled themselves to the idea of annexation of their territory and for that reason Suharto's government tried to impose a new order – by force, and by systematic acculturation of the young people. All was in vain. The young Timorese whom the regime educated were the ones who most opposed Indonesian presence in the territory. An example of such opposition were the many demonstrations, strongly repressed by the Indonesian police and army, both in East Timor and Jakarta, some of which ended in blood-baths, as was the case with the massacre at Santa Cruz Cemetery in November 1991. The Indonesian attitude towards East Timor was one of typically colonialist haughtiness. Indonesia implemented in East Timor all the negative aspects of a colonialist regime: mass executions, destruction of rebellious villages, deportations, land confiscations, exploitation of cheap labour, persecution, imprisonment, torture and murder of leaders, or suspected leaders, of the resistance.

The most serious one, however, was Indonesia's attempt to reduce the East Timorese people to social and economical poverty. Indonesia's interest in East Timor was purely economic. The coffee crop, in spite of having dropped ninety per cent after Portugal left the territory, and the exploitation of marble and oil

were frankly lucrative to the Jakarta government. Consequently, and against every UN resolution, the Indonesians never showed any desire to give in to international pressures and end the typically colonialist exploitation of the territory.

Indonesia never gave in until the countries that most supported it, the United States and Australia, faced with the evidence provided by the images of the chaos into which East Timor plunged after the referendum of August 30, 1999, started to pressure it demanding an end to the massacres, so that peace could be restored in the territory.

2. *The Australian interest in East Timor.*

The Australian position towards East Timor became ambiguous after the invasion of the territory by the Japanese army during World War II. Australia began by sending an armed force to fight the Japanese. Given the enemy's military advantage, this force was obliged to retreat. After the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and Japan's subsequent capitulation, Australia pressured the Allies so that the surrender of the troops stationed in Timor would be made to the Australian army and not to the Dutch administration on the west side and the Portuguese administration on the east side of the island.

The reasons for this Australian attitude seem to have been two: «first, to mark the fact that it was the Australians alone who resisted the Japanese and, second, that the Portuguese (...) should have no military part in the termination of hostilities», since their neutrality during the war had contributed to Japan's complete free hand in transforming the territory into a military base (Gunn, 1999: 233).

Aware of the Australian intentions, the Japanese immediately contacted Lisbon and negotiated with Salazar's government the surrender of their troops close to the Portuguese administration of the territory. Japan's greatest fear was that Timor would fall entirely into the hands of the Allies. Portugal, on the other hand, feared the possibility of losing the administration of the colony.

On the west side of the island, the Australians did not allow the Dutch representatives to sign the document that made the surrender official, which created a «'keen disappointment and concern' on the part of Dutch authorities» (Gunn, 1999: 233-34). They had good reason to worry: two years later, the Netherlands would lose its administrative control over the Indonesian territory.

Australia being one of Indonesia's major allies and having contributed deci-

sively, after World War II, to that country's independence, we can only conclude that Australian interests were not limited to the political level. There were also strong economical interests.

The Australian government began to pay great attention to the island when, in 1947, it received reports mentioning the existence of oilfields in the Timor Sea. They immediately began negotiations with Portugal to establish sea borders, because, they argued, the oilfields were located on the continental platform and therefore belonged to Australia. Portugal did not accept Australia's arguments and awarded the oil exploration to several private companies.

Meanwhile, Australia tried to convince Indonesia with the same arguments, and Suharto's government conceded seventy per cent of the sea bed between the north of the continent and the west side of the Timor island. Left out were 155 miles (250 Km) where, surprisingly, the most profitable oilfields were to be found and which were under Portuguese jurisdiction (cf. Gunn, 1999: 281-82).

When Indonesia decided to invade East Timor in 1975, the Australian government seemed to be considerably pleased. The region was in this way free from the *baleful* influence of the Portuguese, the only ones in the region who obstructed Australian economical interests; an Indonesian invasion also neutralised the Timorese pretensions to independence, a possible source of diplomatic conflicts. It would be very easy to negotiate with Indonesia, Australia's old economic ally. It was not by chance that Australia became, against all UN resolutions, the first country officially to recognise East Timor's integration in Indonesia.

Nevertheless, it may appear odd that the Australian government initially rejected the idea that came from the Timorese political movements in 1975 and that proposed the integration of East Timor in Australia. For some Timorese it was a possibility far more attractive than integration in Indonesia.

This Australia refused for two fundamental reasons: the first had to do with the enormous economical costs. Timor was underdeveloped and the Australian government would have to create infrastructures to modernise the region at the economical, administrative, health and educational levels. This would be far too costly. The second reason had to do with the fact that Australia did not want to displease Indonesia, a country which, since its independence, had laid claims to East Timor. For Australia it would have been far easier to exploit Timor's natural resources without the costs and the weariness that could come from the responsibility of administering the territory.

Thus Australia closed its eyes to twenty-four years of atrocities committed by Indonesia in East Timor. Economical interests were more powerful than the defence of Human Rights and the denunciation of crimes of genocide. Not even

the knowledge of crimes committed against Australian citizens, such as the regrettable case of the killing of several journalists in Balibo in 1975 by Indonesian troops, made the Australian government change its position.

In 1999, after the referendum and the victory of the independence cause, and faced with the evidence of images seen all over the world of the massacres carried out by the militias and the Indonesian army, the Canberra Government, as if following the trends of the international community, decided to condemn the Indonesian actions. With the developments in September 1999, and confronted with likely UN resolutions, and a shift in United States' policy (which finally withdrew its support for Indonesia concerning the East Timor issue), Australia decided to volunteer to lead the peace-keeping force in the territory.

We can ask ourselves if this offer was entirely innocent, if it came solely from a sense of solidarity with the long-suffering people of East Timor, or if there was a stronger reason.

Supporting the UN resolutions that demanded an immediate Indonesian retreat from East Timor and defended military intervention to impose peace, Australia immediately found itself in conflict with Indonesia. The Jakarta government saw it as a sort of stabbing in the back. Having weighed the economical consequences, in the face of overwhelming international support for the Timorese cause Australia decided to accept the challenge of Timor's independence. Supporting the Timorese cause, Australia tried to make frinds with the resistance leaders and was thus able to continue oil exploration.

According to reports by several journalists who went to East Timor after the arrival in the territory of the peace-keeping forces, the Australian performance, in the person of General Peter Cosgrove, who commanded the operation, displayed great haughtiness in dealing with the population in general and the resistance in particular. The exaggerated protection extended to the resistance leader, Xanana Gusmão, was quite suspicious and caused protest reactions, not only from the Timorese, but also from Xanana himself.

We are certain that Australian interests in Timor are merely economic, and that Canberra will continue to fight for these in the coming years. Until, perhaps, the oil dries up. The Timorese People will continue to be the eternal victims, eternally exploited.

Just as during colonialism economical interests determined the actions of the country that practised it, so too do the same interests lead the way in the postcolonial era, covered up by political ideologies no longer current, or covered up by a pretence of humanitarianism – the interests of a few countries which do not wish to lose their sources of profit.

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